

OPERATIONS GROUP

B&amp;C →

NOTES OF INTERDEPARTMENTAL MEETING25TH OCTOBER, 19791. Financial Outlook

Government decision about cuts in External Services still awaited. Some grounds for cautious optimism as far as Monitoring Service is concerned but no chicken-counting.

No guarantee there won't be further cuts annually unless and until the economy takes a turn for the better. Cash Limits for 80/81 expected to be tight, causing problems if next year's pay settlement exceeds them.

Present resources overstretched because of developments such as increase in Iranian, Afghan and Southern African coverage which is welcomed but unfunded by our consumers. Newspaper reimbursement also unbudgeted and could cost us £25000 p.a. With no hope of extra money some adjustments will have to be made to present activities to accommodate these new requirements. Staffing over the Christmas and New Year holidays will have to be reduced to the minimum necessary: extra payments last year cost £12500 and that's too much.

Income from sales of SWB, WBI and the newfile continue to increase, and should comfortably exceed £100,000 this financial year. Numbers of SWB subscribers, which dropped last summer, seem to be picking up again.

2. Meetings with Government and FBIS

The annual meeting of the Watch Committee on Monitoring with FCO and MOD representation was held a fortnight ago but, because the Government's decisions about money were unknown, it felt unable to make representations about the Service's budget which is one of its main functions. Among other matters discussed were a replacement for the Tehran operation, better access to Soviet TV and better distribution of the newfile within the FCO.

The annual Coordination Meeting with FBIS was similarly handicapped as far as discussion of BBC activities was concerned. On the FBIS side, the new Bureau in Abidjan is nearly fully staffed (monitors still under training) and expects to have its own communications next month. The even newer Gulf Bureau, set up to cover unique sources such as Iranian provincial radios and TV and Kabul at times when not audible here, may be a slow developer because of recruitment difficulties. FBIS remain interested in coverage of West European TV, and we hope to be able to make some contribution through our arrangement with a Brussels rediffusion company which we expect to be operational in a week or so.

3. Technical Matters

The new equipment for the remote control of R/T signals picked up at Crowsley is on station, but some problems have arisen which the manufacturers have not yet sorted out. They think they can. The new 200-baud DPA service has also been giving trouble.. Our engineers hope to be able to sort it out and the use of a different aerial in the last 24 hours seems to have improved matters. There is a 12 to 15 month delay in getting a line from London which would be the only alternative to radio reception.

The completion of the replacement of our publishing equipment has been brought forward from next year, and the new installation is now fully operational and seems to be satisfactory.

4. Pay and Grading

H.Admin. explained the basis of the new pay and Grading system the BBC hopes to introduce and which D.Pers. talks about in the latest issue of "Ariel". It's still a bit opaque to me, but if it really gives a bit more room to manoeuvre in matters of pay, and shortens the time taken to deal with grading problems, it is to be welcomed. The present system certainly seems to be on the point of collapse.

John Rae  
Head of Monitoring Service

26th October 1971

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